

WINTER STORM Annex II

I. PURPOSE

- A. This annex has been prepared to ensure a coordinated response by state agencies to requests from local jurisdictions to reduce potential loss of life and to ensure essential services are maintained or quickly restored during and immediately following a major winter storm.

II. SITUATION

- A. All areas of Colorado are vulnerable to major winter storms. Isolation of rural towns and roadways presents the most significant danger to the largest number of people. Longtime residents of the area are usually well equipped to handle routine and even severe winter weather, but with the increase in tourists participating in outdoor winter recreation and the influx of new residents, we must plan for many unprepared people.
- B. Large scale loss of life or property does not normally occur as a result of a winter storm, however, any persons caught out in the storm and stranded motorists are in extreme danger. Isolated homes are also a problem due to power shortages, lack of communications, and failure of heating sources. Loss of utilities in an urban area can create a critical situation in a short period of time for a large number of people. Medical assistance may become critical. The demand for emergency services poses the greatest difficulty, along with locating and rescuing stranded motorists. Emergency feeding of livestock may become necessary.
- C. Secondary effects of a large snowstorm must be planned for, i.e., avalanches, mudslides or flooding.

III. ASSUMPTIONS

- A. See Basic Plan
- B. This plan supports the Department of Transportation's plan for snow and ice removal.
- C. Winter storms will fluctuate in size and intensity and may become severe with little warning.
- D. A winter storm will usually affect the entire state to some degree, but severe impacts may be localized.
- E. Through a variety of means; i.e., National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) radio, standard radio announcements, TV announcements, etc.; citizens will be advised of severe winter weather conditions.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

- A. Unlike some other types of emergencies or disasters, state resources will be involved in a response to a severe winter storm in their routine business. Additional

assistance may be requested by local governments when their capabilities and resources are exceeded. Such assistance, when authorized, will be provided by state agencies operating under their own authority, or as part of an effort coordinated by the Office of Emergency Management operating on behalf of the Governor. The Governor may declare part or all of the state a disaster and request assistance from the federal government if the capabilities and resources of both local and state governments are exceeded.

- B. State agencies will provide usual services in responding to a winter storm according to their internal policies. Only when a storm is of such magnitude that emergency declarations are necessary, will additional assistance be requested by the Office of Emergency Management. Safety of personnel is the priority during any storm response.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Governor=s Office:

1. Determine, directly or via delegation, when a winter storm is of such severity that it would be unsafe to have nonessential state workers respond to their jobs and to make the necessary announcements by radio and television.
2. Authorize state active duty status for use of Colorado National Guard personnel to provide lifesaving assistance, if necessary.
3. Following the state disaster statutes, make monies available through the state disaster fund or other funds to provide for basic recovery of essential life services.
4. Activate the State Emergency Operations Plan
5. Declare a State of Disaster Emergency where appropriate.

B. Office of Emergency Management, DOLA:

1. Monitor weather forecasts and prepare to coordinate state assistance as needed.
2. Coordinate state response to requests for assistance from local jurisdictions.
3. Activate and staff the State Emergency Operations Center, if needed, and coordinate state assistance following established EOC procedures.
4. Maintain communications with Governor=s office, other state agencies and local jurisdictions regarding the status of the storm, available resources and recovery efforts.

C. Department of Transportation

1. Effect snow removal, plowing, barricading, and ice removal and determine need for road closures.

2. Maintain communications and advise dispatch of current conditions in all areas of the state - information will be relayed to the Office of Emergency Management, as needed.
3. Upon notification of snow emergency conditions, provide crews and equipment to assist in snow removal, rescue operations, necessary transportation, establishment of barricades and restoration, as requested, in support of local jurisdictions when CDOT has the appropriate equipment.
4. Highways will be plowed and sanded according to a plan of priorities. Additional assistance will be prioritized to provide networks of roadways open to provide a transportation system for emergency vehicles such as fire department, law enforcement, and rescue personnel.
5. During severe snow or blowing snow (white outs), or other conditions that could endanger personnel, plowing and sanding can be suspended at the discretion of the CDOT Director.

D. Colorado State Patrol:

1. Establish traffic control on state highways and determine need for road closures.
2. Maintain communications and advise dispatch of current conditions in all areas of the state - these reports will be relayed, as needed, to the Office of Emergency Management.
3. Assist in evacuation of stranded motorists/ population; preserve law and order.

E. Department of Human Services/American Red Cross

1. Provide shelters and provisions for stranded people.

F. Other State Agencies

1. Provide support as requested by the Office of Emergency Management.

VI. Appendix

1. Winter Storm Definitions

(a) WINTER STORM DEFINITIONS

VII. STORM WARNINGS¹

- A. Heavy Snow Warning - are issued when a snowfall of four (4) inches or more is expected within a 12-hour period or a fall of six (6) inches or more is expected within a 24-hour period.
- B. Blizzard Warnings - are issued when winds with speeds of at least 35 mph are accompanied by considerable falling or blowing snow and temperatures of 20 degrees F or lower are expected to prevail for an extended period of time.
- C. Severe Blizzard Warnings - are issued when blizzards of extreme proportions are expected and indicate wind with speeds of at least 45 mph plus a great density of falling or blowing snow and a temperature of 10 degrees F or lower.
- D. Cold Wave Warnings - indicate an expected rapid fall in temperature within a 24-hour period which will require substantially increased protection to agricultural, industrial, commercial and social activities. The temperature falls and minimum temperatures required to justify cold wave warnings vary with the changing of the season and with geographic location. Regardless of the month or the section of the country, a cold wave warning is a red flag alert to the public that during a forthcoming forecast period a change to very cold weather will require greater than normal protective measures.
- E. Hazardous Driving (Travelers') Warnings - are issued to indicate that falling, blowing or drifting snow, freezing rain or drizzle, sleet or strong winds will make driving difficult.
- F. Stockmen's Warnings - alert ranchers and farmers that livestock will require protection from a large accumulation of snow or ice, a rapid drop in temperature, or strong winds.

VIII. ICE AND SNOW

- A. Ice Storm - Freezing rain or drizzle is called an ice storm. Moisture falls in liquid form, but freezes upon impact.
- B. Sleet - Sleet is identified as frozen raindrops (ice pellets) which bounce when hitting the ground. Sleet in sufficient depth causes hazardous driving.
- C. Snow - Snow in a forecast without qualifying words such as occasional or intermittent means that the snow fall is of a steady nature, and will continue for several hours.

¹A severe weather **Watch** is issued by the national Weather service when conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop. A watch is usually issued for large areas involving many counties. A severe weather **Warning** is an urgent message to tell you that severe weather is imminent or is occurring.

- D. Snow Flurries - Snow falling for short durations of time at intermittent periods. One of the problems with snow flurries is that most frequently visibility is greatly reduced. Accumulations from snow flurries are generally small.
- E. Snow Squalls - are brief, intense falls of snow and are comparable to summer rain showers. Usually accompanied by gusty surface winds.
- F. Blowing and Drifting Snow - is used in forecasts where loose snow on the ground or falling snow or both is being blown about to a degree that horizontal visibility is greatly restricted. After a substantial snow has ended and strong winds start blowing and the snow is whipped up from the ground this is referred to as a ground blizzard.
- G. Blizzards - are the most hazardous and perilous of all winter storms. Characterized by low temperatures and by strong winds bearing large amounts of snow. Most of the snow accompanying a blizzard is in the form of fine, powdery particles of snow which are whipped up in such great quantities that at times visibility is only a few yards.